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Security Council

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Thursday, 16 November 2017, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Cardi	(Italy)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will be very brief. My delegation would like to place on record its support for draft resolution S/2017/933, submitted by the Russian Federation and China.

The President: The Council has taken note of the Bolivian delegation's support for draft resolution S/2017/933.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them documents S/2017/933 and S/2017/962, which contain the texts of two draft resolutions, respectively.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, we would like to request that draft resolution S/2017/933, submitted by the Russian Federation, be put to the vote second and that draft resolution S/2017/962, submitted by the United States of America, be put to the vote first. We know that the United States has told you and the Council that we should vote on our draft resolution first, in accordance with rule 32 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure. We do not agree with that reasoning, however. It is impossible for our draft resolution to be put to the vote first without our permission, for the following reasons.

The priority provided for in rule 32, on the consideration of draft resolutions in accordance with the order of their submission, allows for the possibility and right that whoever submits a draft resolution first can request that it be put to a vote first in cases when there is a counter draft before the Council, which in this case is the draft resolution submitted by the United States. However, that is a privilege that one can refuse to avail oneself of. Submission under rule 32 is not the same as publication in blue. The two terms are often confused, in fact, but incorrectly. If we follow the rules of procedure, submission should include publication in blue and the request for a vote. The United States delegation was the first to request a vote, and in that case our draft resolution should be put to the vote second, because we asked for the vote after them. We therefore insist on our draft resolution being put to the vote second.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I would like to read out the first part of rule 32 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, which says "Principal motions and draft resolutions shall have precedence in the order of their submission."

My Russian friends have chosen once again to say that they go according to procedure, except when it applies to something they do not like. What we have to do is go according to procedure. Rule 32 spells out exactly how that order should be. We do not need the Russians coming in and saying "We do not like the answer to this, so we want you to change it". I think that the Council should be disciplined, abide by rule 32 of the provisional rules of procedure and take the politics out of the situation.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are not playing political games here. On the other hand, perhaps we are, because if we were not playing political games, we would not be having this discussion today. But while we have studied this issue, and the Council's practice on it varies, we will not delve into that at the moment, as we see no purpose in getting mired in procedural discussions. We merely ask that you, Mr. President, put the question to a procedural vote. We propose that the Russian draft resolution (S/2017/933) be put to the vote second, after the draft resolution submitted by the United States (S/2017/962).

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): Rule 32 of the provisional rules of procedure states that principal motions and draft resolutions shall have precedence in the order of their submission.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Let us put it to a procedural vote.

The President: I thank Mr. Nebenzia and Mrs. Haley for the points they have made. In our understanding, in accordance with rule 32 of the provisional rules of procedure, which states that principal motions and draft resolutions shall have precedence in the order of their submission, the draft resolution submitted by Russia (S/2017/933) should therefore be put to the vote first. The representative of the Russian Federation has requested a procedural vote on the question of whether the Russian draft resolution should be put to the vote second and the United States draft resolution first (S/2017/962).

I shall put the procedural motion to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Russian Federation

Against:

France, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Egypt, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Senegal, Uruguay

The President: The proposal received 3 votes in favour, 7 votes against and 5 abstentions. The procedural motion was not adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In this case, Mr. President, in accordance with rule 35 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, which says that a motion or draft resolution can be withdrawn at any time as long as no vote has been taken on it, the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document S/2017/933 wish to withdraw it.

The President: I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2017/962, submitted by France, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Russian Federation

Abstaining:

China, Egypt

The President: There were 11 votes in favour, 2 against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations gives the Council the responsibility to

> "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations ... to maintain or restore international peace and security."

Among the greatest threats to peace and security is the use of chemical weapons. That is why for more than two decades, the international community has outlawed the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons. For almost half a decade, the Council has worked tirelessly to put an end to the use of such weapons in Syria.

But for the tenth time regarding Syria and for the fourth time regarding chemical weapons, Russia has actively obstructed the international community's ability to identify the perpetrators of chemical-weapon attacks. Russia has issued vetoes before in order to prevent Council action and ensure accountability in Syria. Russia has invented reasons not to support a mechanism that it helped created, because it did not like its scientific conclusions. Russia has acted to obstruct those investigations many times, but today it strikes a deep blow. Russia has killed the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), which has the overwhelming support of the Council.

By eliminating our ability to identify the attackers, Russia has undermined our ability to deter future attacks. Al-Assad and ISIS will no longer be on notice for the use of chemical weapons as a result of Russia's actions today. The message to anyone listening is clear. In effect, Russia accepts the use of chemical weapons in Syria. How then can we trust Russia's supposed support

for peace in Syria? How can anyone take Russia's proposal for political talks in Sochi seriously?

I have lost count of how many times I have stood in this Chamber and implored Russia to do the right thing in Syria. But instead Russia has played games. Russia wants a mechanism, but not an independent one. It wants reporting, but not if it blames Syria. If Council members pay attention, they will notice that the Russians think the JIM works great when it finds the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant at fault for chemical weapons, but when the perpetrator is one of its own friends, the problem is suddenly the JIM, not its friend that committed the crime.

But Russia knows how bad it looks to defend a regime's use of chemical weapons, so it attempts to create a distraction. In this case, the distraction is the draft resolution that it offered. The draft resolution would also allow Russia or any other member to micromanage the JIM and it would put the Council in the absurd position of putting the fox in charge of the henhouse, having countries such as Russia and Syria dictate how, when and where we investigate the use of chemical weapons.

In recent weeks, the United States has taken great pains to work with Russia in drafting our draft resolution. It is a shame that we found out today they had planned to veto it the entire time. We revised our draft resolution three times to incorporate Russia's concerns and those of all Council members. At the same time, Russia refused to hold a single consultation on its own draft, while we held many consultations. It is clear now that the only concern Russia had was that the JIM even existed and that it was capable of finding the truth. Russia had hoped to bury the truth about chemical weapons in Syria, but it has failed. We know who is behind these attacks. The JIM has provided that information time and time again. The United States will not give up on trying to achieve justice for the victims in Syria.

Tragically, these attacks are ongoing. New cases are being alleged. Russia has destroyed our best tool for attributing these attacks, but it is not our only tool for ending this barbaric practice. There is the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. There is the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, which is mandated to generate the evidence to bring fair and independent criminal proceedings against those who commit atrocities in Syria.

And if and when it is necessary, there is the United States of America. Regardless of what its Russian protectors do in the Security Council, the Al-Assad regime should be on clear notice that the United States does not accept Syria's use of chemical weapons. As we did in April, we will do it again if we must — we will defend the international standard against chemical-weapons use. It would be wise for the Al-Assad regime to heed this warning.

The Security Council created the JIM in a rare moment of unity. I thank the other members of the Council for their support, but what a shame it is that Russia has brought us to this point. What a shame it is that Russia has revealed itself to be a Government whose allegiance is to the Syrian regime, not to the truth or the protection of innocent civilians. Russia may have succeeded in silencing one independent voice in Syria today, but there are others that will carry on this work, and we will not stop until there is justice for the victims and accountability for the perpetrators of the chemical-weapons attacks in Syria.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France is appalled by today's vote and the result of the Russian veto. This result is particularly serious in and of itself, but it is also potentially fraught with consequences for the future. The situation we are confronted with — the proven use of chemical weapons in Syria — is indeed one of those case studies that should provoke a unanimous and immediate mobilization of the Security Council.

All conditions are there for that result. Faced with the despicable use of chemical weapons in Syria, the Security Council created the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) to establish facts and responsibilities. In keeping with its mandate, this investigative mechanism works tirelessly with undeniable professionalism and impartiality. It leads to clear, well-documented conclusions that unambiguously prove the responsibility of the Syrian regime in several cases and that of Da'esh in others.

Contrary to what the professionals of confusion would have us believe, we are not in a gray zone here. The situation in all its horror is crystal clear. In the

twenty-first century, terrorists — and a State — are intentionally using chemical weapons to kill women and children, among others. Their faces disfigured by an atrocious death will long haunt our memories and our consciences.

And in the face of this situation, one of the major players in the international community — one of the major partners of my country, to which we are bound by so many links — has decided for the fourth time to veto the renewal of the Mechanism in order to protect the Damascus regime. Such an attitude leaves those who deeply respect Russia speechless. This cannot be the last word of that great country whose role in the international balance of power is decisive.

It is even more true that the raison d'être of the JIM is more justified than ever. More than 60 cases of use need to be examined. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has already confirmed for us the use of sarin gas on 30 March in Latamneh. That is why France supported the draft resolution prepared by the United States and would like to acknowledge the efforts of our American friends who worked with all the delegations to propose the renewal of the JIM by presenting a balanced text which contains substantial concessions aimed precisely at trying to bring members of the Council together.

Let us carefully assess the seriousness of the issues together. Beyond Syria, what is at stake first and foremost is the safeguarding of the most basic human rights and the fight against impunity. The use of chemical weapons is not only morally untenable and legally unacceptable; it is also a terrifying step backward for all of us, as the Syrian regime and Da'esh are trying to outdo one another to see who is the more horrific and barbaric.

Let us also not forget that these atrocities are war crimes, and they have made chemical terrorism into a dangerous reality. What is also at stake today is the future of the international non-proliferation regime. While international non-proliferation regimes are one of the major achievements of recent decades, we should not let the most successful of them — the chemical regime — be undermined by political calculation and division. It would be a deadly precedent for the other non-proliferation regimes and an irresponsible attitude for which we would all pay a high price.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone is not just a moral abomination against the most basic principles of humanity; to look away — to accept the use of chemical weapons in Syria without reacting — would amount in fact to giving a blank check or a green light to the proliferation and the use of these weapons elsewhere and would create, moreover, the most favourable soil for the very chemical terrorism that all of us fear.

We created the JIM upon the joint initiative of Russia and the United States in order to transcend political disagreements and establish the truth. That is why we established it. It is therefore a moral failure and a strategic mistake on the part of those who renege on their word and commitments when the truth comes to light.

The JIM was never a Western tool. It belongs to the entire international community and we are duty-bound to strengthen it. The Mechanism cannot and must not be held to ransom by political squabbles, or worse, tactical games. Undermining the JIM is tantamount to playing with fire, and could, in the long-term, jeopardize the non-proliferation regime, in particular with regard to chemical weapons, which we all built block by block. The JIM should be able to conduct its activities without preconditions or interference.

A political solution alone will enable us to put an end to the horrendous conflict in Syria, through a negotiated and credible democratic transition, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva Communiqué. However, there will be no sustainable peace in Syria in an environment of impunity. Peace will depend on justice and justice requires the means for determining those responsible for committing atrocities in Khan Shaykhun, and other chemical attacks, who must be held accountable for their criminal acts.

I would like to share a profound belief with the Council. Today's vote cannot be the final word. France will not resign itself to failure or resort to playing political games that will not address the current challenges. Given the gravity of such challenges, we have no right to give up or to lose heart. The Council can count on France's continued efforts in all relevant forums to combat impunity in Syria and elsewhere, and to promote, forever and everywhere, the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime on which our security depends.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Today's meeting is indeed a regrettable one. I hope that the victims of chemical weapons attacks have not been watching our debate so far, and, in particular, the vote on today's draft

resolution, which we strongly supported. I must say that it is highly regrettable that the Council has again failed to unite behind an extension of the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). Many commendable efforts have been made, in particular in the past few days to make that happen. The Mechanism was unanimously set up by the Security Council and with a clear objective. That objective remains; so too does opposition. Nonetheless, allow me to reiterate a few points.

We unequivocally and in the strongest terms condemn the repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Joint Investigative Mechanism and its objective, impartial and independent investigations have our full support. We have confidence in its professionalism, technical expertise and comprehensive forensic analysis. We have provided technical expertise and financial support. The mandate of the JIM must urgently be extended for the following well-known reasons.

First, the JIM plays a critical role in protecting the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, as the French Ambassador just stated.

Secondly, there are still some 60 cases of alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria being examined by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons that could be referred to the JIM. The sarin attack in Lataminah on 30 March, cited in the most recent report of the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (S/2017/931), is a case in point. It is our duty as members of the Council to do what we can to enable all of those attacks to be investigated, and to hold those responsible to account. Chemical weapons use is illegal; it constitutes a threat to international peace and security and can amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. There can be no impunity for such crimes.

Thirdly, we believe that the JIM has an important deterrent effect. The risks of new chemical weapons attacks in Syria might increase on our watch if we do not renew the JIM.

We have listened carefully to all arguments made by members of the Council over the past few weeks. It is our assessment that there should be room to reach compromise. The JIM was set up by the Council with a very clear objective. That objective remains. Renewing the JIM's mandate should be possible, but it can be achieved only if the Council unites. We believe that all efforts to reach agreement must continue. We will support all serious and genuine attempts to renew the JIM's mandate. We will continue to engage to find a way forward.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Ukraine co-sponsored and voted in favour of the draft resolution contained in document S/2017/962 on the basis of the following position.

Continuous allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, which cause enormous suffering and are a blatant violation of international law, require an uncompromising and firm response from the Council, not only by condemning such horrible crimes, but by taking effective action, including through mobilizing all tools available to that end and without undermining their efficiency to ensure accountability. Ukraine commends the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) in executing its mandate, based on the principles of impartiality, objectivity and independence. It is the only tool at the Council's disposal with the mandate to identify the organizers and perpetrators of chemical weapons use. No outstanding differences or opinions on the Syrian chemical file should be used to justify actions aimed at destroying the JIM, as doing that effectively amounts to shielding those responsible for atrocious crimes from justice.

Today the Council again failed to exercise its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations. The Council's continuous inability to address chemical attacks in Syria is leading to further impunity and sending a signal to perpetrators that they can get away with murder. Despite overwhelming support, it has already become routine that one Council member continues to block each and every decision that could move us closer to bringing the perpetrators of atrocities in Syria to justice.

Playing the JIM card in one's political game is utterly cynical and cannot be understood or accepted by responsible members of the international community. I wish to sincerely commend the dedication and flexibility shown by the delegation of the United States, which made every effort to preserve the JIM, including by inserting the maximum number of concerns from various Council members into the final text, while preserving the primary part of the JIM mandate, which

is investigating and identifying those responsible for chemical weapons use in Syria. But, regrettably, different approaches to the subject are not the issue. The issue is that of a single-minded pursuit to destroy an international system built around respect for norms and principles of international law, which we, and our predecessors, have all so carefully constructed for many decades.

Despite the results of the vote, I believe we must continue our joint efforts in defending and restoring respect for international law. I wish to reiterate that the time for justice will come.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Today we have reached the end of the road for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). It was a road that all members of the Security Council set out on together two years ago. We did so in the hope that those using chemical weapons in Syria would be identified and held to account. Thanks to today's veto, that hope has suffered a serious blow.

Under the current and previous leadership panels, the staff of the Mechanism worked patiently and diligently to uncover the truth. I pay tribute to them today. Thanks to their efforts, the world now knows what happened in Talmenes, Sarmin, Marea, Qamenas, Khan Shaykhun and Umm Hawsh.

Let us make no mistake — the JIM has succeeded. It is Russia that has failed. It has failed in its duties as a permanent member of the Security Council. It has failed as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It has failed as a supposed supporter of peace in Syria.

We have been here before. This is not the first time this year that we have attempted to renew the JIM's mandate. Less than a month ago, we all sat in this very Chamber and watched as Russia vetoed a simple technical rollover of the mandate (see S/PV.8073) — a rollover that did not judge any party or add any conditions. We have worked tirelessly through extensive consultations between Council members to try to understand Russia's concerns and find a renewal on which we could all agree. The United States draft, in favour of which we are proud to have voted, was balanced and reasonable.

Russia, on the other hand, has refused to engage constructively. Last month, it quoted fantasy and fiction in the Chamber to justify its veto. But in negotiations, its experts made abundantly clear why they would not support the JIM's renewal. Put simply, they cannot, or rather they will not accept any investigation that attributes blame to their Syrian allies, no matter how robust the investigation, no matter how clear and solid the evidence. Russia will say that it engaged, that it put forward an alternative text, yet its text sought only to undermine and discredit what has already been painstakingly demonstrated — that the Syrian regime is responsible for the blatant repeated use of chemical weapons against its own people.

The seventh report of the JIM (S/2017/904, annex), as we heard last week from the Head of the Leadership Panel (see S/PV.8090), details the thorough methodology of the investigation. Its consideration of alternative hypotheses, the careful corroboration of sources and the use of independent, internationally recognized forensic experts for analysis of data. Faced with this clear, careful consideration and conclusion, Russia made a string of entirely destructive demands in its text and attempted to weaken significantly the remit of the JIM. It demanded that the JIM take samples from a Syrian airbase, when the JIM has made crystal clear why doing so would not advance the investigation. It demanded that the JIM visit Khan Shaykhun, where it would face unacceptable risks of attack. It maligned the impartiality, experience and expertise of the JIM's staff, ignoring the thorough professional report they had produced and Russia's own original support for the group. Russia demands that the JIM listen only to Syrian-approved witnesses and Syrian accounts of events. Why should evidence from a party to the conflict accused of war crimes carry more weight than the corroborated testimony of victims and observers and the cold laboratory analysis of physical evidence?

Thanks to Russia's veto today, Da'esh fighters will be joining Al-Assad in celebration. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is currently investigating other cases. This vote means that the JIM will not investigate who is responsible for these atrocious crimes. Russia's transparent use of its Security Council status to block this investigation again shows that, as a party to the conflict, it cannot credibly play a leading role in the political process, such as convening the Syrian parties in Sochi.

Most of us here are totally committed to upholding the norm against the use of chemical weapons. We will not be stopped by what has happened today. We will keep working to identify and bring to account those

who have used these vile weapons and to deter those who might think of doing so in the future. Russia once played a responsible role in securing the destruction of much of Syria's chemical arsenal and in creating the JIM. Regrettably, today the world can see that Russian policy now is to protect the Syrian State — whatever the cost to Russia's reputation.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay regrets that for the second time in less than a month, the Security Council has been unable to renew the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). In my country's view, the JIM has been an invaluable instrument for carrying out investigations for the two past years on the responsibility for incidents in Syria in which the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons established that chemical weapons had been used against the civilian population.

Time and again, we have expressed in the Chamber our total confidence in the serious, independent, impartial and objective work of the JIM, whatever the conclusions it reaches in its investigations. In fact, to date, the Mechanism has attributed responsibility for the use of banned chemical weapons to agents in the Syrian Government and to Da'esh terrorists. These are serious crimes for which there can be no impunity.

Through the JIM's investigation, we have been able to determine, in many of those cases, who was behind the use of such weapons. But once again, in February the Council was also unable to adopt a resolution to sanction the responsible parties (see S/PV.7893). That is why we reiterate our position — which is shared by the almost 120 signatory parties to the Code of Conduct promoted by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group — that Council members that enjoy veto privileges should abstain from its use in the case of atrocious crimes, such as the attacks currently under investigation by the JIM.

It is paradoxical, frustrating and even sad to see so many roadblocks to a mechanism that was established by the Council itself only two years ago (see S/PV.7501). For serious crimes, such as those the JIM tries to investigate, not investigating is tantamount to concealing. We repeat that these abhorrent crimes must not go unpunished, whoever the perpetrators. We call on all members of the Council to continue to work on garnering consensus with a view to extending the work of the Mechanism.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to echo the words of deep frustration voiced by several members of the Security Council this afternoon. This is undoubtedly a collective failure, but those who are watching can see that it was a predictable result. We all came here today prepared with our written statements knowing that we would not reach the needed consensus for the adoption of a resolution. The Security Council once again leaves a poor impression of a lack of unity on such a sensitive topic.

Bolivia reiterates its most firm and categorical condemnation of the use of chemical agents as weapons. It is an unjustifiable criminal act wherever, whenever and by whomsoever it is carried out, as its use is a serious violation of international law and a threat to international peace and security. We also note once again that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) must carry out its work in the most methodical, transparent and fundamentally depoliticized manner so as to avoid the instrumentalization of its work.

The renewal of the mandate must maintain the integrity and independence of the Mechanism. Therefore, we must consider only the purpose for which it was created through clear working methods in order to avoid mistakes of the past. Its work must be carried out in the most methodical, technical and reliable manner possible, with the help of independent, impartial, complete and conclusive investigations.

In our most recent meeting on this issue (see S/PV.8090), some delegations expressed certain technical inconsistencies in the JIM's most recent report (S/2017/904, annex). We believe that such extremes must be addressed, resolved and serve as a basis for improving the work of the Mechanism so as to prevent them in future investigations. Bolivia voted against the draft resolution contained in document S/2017/962 because it explicitly asked the JIM and the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic to travel to the scenes of incidents in order to gather more verifiable evidence in situ so as to ensure a thorough investigation.

We are committed to continuing to work towards strengthening investigation processes in a more transparent manner, and for that, we call on the Council to resolve its differences and unite its efforts

to maintain unity on such an important issue for the international community.

As we stated at the beginning of this meeting, within the framework of and in accordance with article 35 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, Bolivia supported the draft resolution (S/2017/933) presented by the Russian Federation and China. That having been said, my delegation requires the presidency to put the draft resolution to the vote, as stipulated in rule 35 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

The President: I have taken note of that request.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Allow me to say, quite frankly, that we do not feel that what has happened today in this Chamber has been very dignifying for the Council — the organ of the United Nations with great responsibility, the primary responsibility for international peace and security. That is perhaps a signature of the times we are in. We know that the way by which the international community will succeed in controling chemical weapons and eliminating their use is for countries such as the United States and Russia to work together to ensure that that noble objective is achieved. There is no other way.

Frankly speaking, the issue has become so politicized that it seems it is becoming extremely difficult to focus on the real problem. Incidentally, we have always felt that the situation in Syria — not only on this issue, but on others as well — has always been politicized. In our view, it is not wise to blame this or that State for the logjam that we are in. All the problems we are facing appear to be the result of a lack, of failure to focus on the major issue, which is a common danger and a reflection of a much more complex issue that we are currently facing.

Allow me to explain why we decided to vote in favour of the draft resolution (S/2017/962). First of all, we are very keen to contribute to the renewal of the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). We believe that it is and will continue to be useful. Sweden has explained why, and I do not want to repeat what was said.

Secondly, we had some doubts about whether it was time for the JIM to draw the conclusion it made in its seventh report (S/2017/904, annex). With regard to that issue, the United States showed sufficient flexibility, for which we were very grateful. There was therefore no reason for us not to support the American draft resolution, all the more so because that country was ready to engage with us and accept amendments, which we appreciate.

However, we are again in a stalemate, a logjam. The future of the JIM is in the balance. We only have one day to save it. We are hopeful that we will come to some consensus to ensure that the JIM will exist beyond tomorrow, for which we need the support of everybody. We hope that a technical rollover is something that we could consider. We do not believe that we have come to the end of the road; we disagree with that contention by the United Kingdom. We can still proceed and achieve something meaningful to ensure that the life of the JIM is protected and assured.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): For Kazakhstan, the fight against proliferation and the use of weapons of mass destruction remains one of the most important priorities of its foreign policy. For that reason, we are most seriously concerned about the current state of the non-proliferation regime in Syria, as well as in the region as a whole. We must recognize that the use of chemical weapons in Syria continues, with persistent threats of chemical terrorism a grave reality. In addition, many allegations on the use of chemical agents in Syria are still undisclosed.

Based on those circumstances and on our understanding of the need to preserve the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), we intended to support both draft resolutions that were to extend the mandate of the JIM. Having read its seventh report (S/2017/904, annex), we became even more convinced that the investigation should continue and that the methodology behind the investigation should be fully and strictly enforced.

However, to our great regret, we again saw an extremely disappointing picture when the Council could not act with a single voice, meaning that as a collective body, we have failed to act as one. The results of the voting clearly show, yet again, that we have to work more to be inclusive of all opinions in order to be successful. It is always important and relevant for all parties to work closely in the search for a compromise, despite the existing principled positions.

It was commendable that during the latest consultations, the United States demonstrated the

willingness to accommodate some changes. At the same time, we are also sympathetic to the concerns of the Russian delegation regarding the JIM report and its conclusions. We support the need to further improve the work of the Mechanism. But both sides must work out their differences, and we are here to make sure that we achieve a solution.

I want to emphasize once again that for Kazakhstan, the main priorities are to relentlessly continue to fight against the threat or the use of chemical weapons, in Syria as well as anywhere in the world. The situation today is that all members of the Council are convinced of the need to continue the work of the JIM. But clearly it needs to undergo some changes to meet the expectations of all member countries of the Security Council. We therefore call on all, first and foremost those countries that initiated the creation of the Mechanism, to actively continue consultations and search for mutually acceptable language, so that the Mechanism can resume its work.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): As we inevitably move towards the expiry of the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), the Security Council — our Council — which is responsible, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, for the maintenance of international peace and security, is unfortunately once again divided on the critical issue of chemical weapons use in Syria. Everybody around this table agrees about the relevance of the Mechanism, not only with respect to deterrence but also to dealing with ongoing allegations about the use of chemical weapons in Syria, in a context where there is a risk of chemical terrorism.

The delegation of Senegal voted in favour of the draft resolution submitted by the United States (S/2017/962), bearing in mind the indescribable suffering of the Syrian population. They have been the victim of all kinds of atrocities, including painful, slow deaths as a result of burns from chemical weapons. We did so as well because we are persuaded of the utility of the Joint Investigative Mechanism tasked with implementing, in an independent, impartial and objective manner, the mandate conferred on it by 2235 (2015), a mandate unanimously renewed by resolution 2319 (2016). That is why we welcome the openness and spirit of compromise demonstrated by the United States as the penholder, including by taking into account the legitimate concerns of many Member States with respect to improving the methodology of the work of the Mechanism so as to ensure the quality of its reports.

Despite the outcome of this vote and the deeply diverging views in the Council on the seventh report (S/2017/904, annex) my delegation is of the view that it is still possible for us to arrive at a consensus, at the unanimity that prevailed at the establishment of the Mechanism and to arrive at its renewal. We also welcome the reaffirmation by the American delegation to persevere in its efforts along those lines. We invite all other members to pursue those efforts, to demonstrate compromise to preserve the Mechanism, which for us is an important component of the global non-proliferation architecture. Hence, my delegation reiterates its complete support for the Joint Investigative Mechanism, which has made commendable efforts, pursuant to the relevant Council resolutions, to establish responsibility for the unacceptable use of chemical substances as weapons against the civilian population in the Syrian Arab Republic.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates the imperative of arriving at a negotiated political solution to the Syrian crisis on the basis of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2354 (2017).

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China is gravely concerned about chemical weapon attacks in Syria and expresses its sympathy to the Syrian people for their sufferings. China is firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons by whichever country, organization or person, for whatever purposes and under whatever circumstances.

We have always maintained that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) should carry out comprehensive, objective and impartial investigations into chemical weapon attacks in Syria, basing its work on solid evidence, and draw conclusions that can stand the test of time and reality. Only if it does so can the perpetrators of chemical weapon attacks in Syria and those accountable be brought to justice and can the Syrian people be free from the sufferings caused by chemical weapon attacks.

China has noted that in its recent report (S/2017/904, annex), the JIM has indicated that for security reasons, and because the attacks occurred too long ago, it decided not to go to Khan Shaykhun and Umm Hawsh for on-site visits. We have also noted that some Council members have different views regarding the methodology and

conclusions of the JIM. China supports the Mechanism in further carrying out its work. At the same time, we also hope that it will improve its working methods and procedures, overcome difficulties and problems relating to on-site investigations, use more scientific and rational methods for investigation and evidence collection, and further improve its performance so as to ensure the reliability and credibility of the conclusions and address the concerns of all the parties.

By the draft resolution that was just put to a vote (S/2017/962), the Council would have decided to extend the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism by one year. It contained some positive provisions, such as condemning chemical weapon attacks in Syria, calling for investigations into the incidents, calling upon all the parties to assist the Mechanism in carrying out on-site visits, and expressing concerns about the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors, particularly terrorist organizations. However, with regard to specific measures to improve the working methods, the draft did not fully address the legitimate concerns of some Council members. In view of those considerations, China abstained.

With the joint efforts of all the parties, the Astana talks registered good results. A new round of Geneva talks will soon be held. A political settlement of the question of Syria is now at a critical stage. The Council should proceed from the overarching goal of reaching a political settlement on the question of Syria, remain united on the question of chemical weapons in Syria and create favourable conditions for a political settlement. On that question, the international community should join hands and push all the parties in Syria to pursue, under the auspices of the United Nations, a political process that is owned and led by the Syrians so as to reach a solution that is acceptable to all.

China will continue to play a constructive role in seeking a political settlement so as to find a comprehensive, just and proper solution to the question in Syria at an early date.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Japan supported and co-sponsored the draft resolution submitted by the United States (S/2017/962) because we believe that it would have been the best way to keep the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) in operation, while addressing various issues raised during the discussion on improving the work of the JIM at the latest Council meeting on this item, on 7 November (see S/PV.8090).

Japan has repeatedly stated that we have confidence in the expertise, impartiality and professionalism of the JIM. Its work should continue until all perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons have been identified.

It is deeply regrettable that the Security Council has again failed to overcome its differences. There is no change in the fact that the Council is ultimately responsible for ensuring accountability for the use of chemical weapons. I call on Council members not to abandon our efforts to prevent the further use of chemical weapons and not to allow impunity.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt reiterates its complete rejection of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, based on our firm position against the use of any kinds of weapons of mass destruction and their ownership, development or attempts to acquire such weapons. We continue to safeguard and care about the well-being of the fraternal Syrian people who are suffering from the use of those chemical weapons. For many years, their suffering has been unspeakable because of the conflict in that country.

In that context, Egypt reiterates once again its position, demanding the identification of the parties responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria by means of an investigation that would meet all the substantive criteria to perform the task at hand.

Experience has proven throughout the existencce of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) that there is a pressing need to improve its methodology, particularly through carrying out field visits to the sites that are under investigation because they have witnessed the use of chemical weapons. These visits should include the excavation, recording and collection of evidence and samples. The JIM should also study and explore all possible scenarios related to incidents of the use of chemical weapons.

Egypt has sought to include in any draft resolution on the renewal of the JIM mandate before the Security Council all the bases and principles that would ensure that it is able to operate, without excessive technicalities that could obstruct its implementation and in a way that would help to collect solid, trustworthy evidence. However, our proposals have not been received very positively or realistically. On the other hand, Egypt

has underscored the importance of the work of the JIM and of improving its methodology, which would require separating the renewal of its mandate from the issue of addressing its reports. The reports are the substantive aspect of the Mechanism's work and its results, and should be addressed independently of the issue of renewing the mandate and developing its methodology. This principled position led Egypt to support the draft resolution submitted by the United States in October (S/2017/884), which was limited to renewing the Mechanism's mandate without relating it to the content of its reports.

In the past few days, Egypt has attempted in all sincerity to arrive at a balanced, compromise alternative that would enable the Security Council to renew the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and improve its methodology, with a focus on the substantive observations that have been presented regarding its methodology and the implications of that since the renewal of its mandate last year. However, the two draft resolutions submitted in the past few days (S/2017/933 and S/2017/962) did not take those concerns into consideration. That did not help us to achieve the desired result, and the Security Council reached a negative conclusion on the issue of renewing the mandate.

Egypt abstained in the voting on draft resolution S/2017/962, extending the mandate of the JIM, despite our position in favour of identifying the parties responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We intended to abstain in the voting on the second draft resolution (S/2017/933), which was withdrawn, because it polarized the handling of the conclusions of the Mechanism's report and the renewal of its mandate, resulting in an inability to achieve the objectives sought by the international community — that is, the renewal of the Mechanism's mandate and the adoption of working methods that would guarantee evidence-based, indisputable results with respect to the identity of the perpetrators in Syria.

Egypt is ready to revisit its position and overcome fixed political positions in order to put the interests of the Syrian people first. The Security Council, having established the Joint Investigative Mechanism, is responsible for guaranteeing everything it needs to do an impartial job in carrying out its task of identifying the persons and entities responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Egypt is it prepared to work with all interested parties and stakeholders to provide the groundwork and criteria needed to guarantee an objective investigation.

Egypt once again affirms that the only motive behind our position on the issue of renewing the JIM and improving its methodology is to work in the interests of our brother people of Syria, to ensure that the use of chemical weapons in Syria does not recur and to identify those responsible for using these weapons in the past. That is consistent with our efforts to end the Syrian people's suffering and achieve a final political settlement that will guarantee them a life of dignity and security.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As we all know, the Russian Federation was unable to support the draft resolution (S/2017/962) submitted by the United States delegation. Today we have been told that we refused to engage in consultations or to communicate. That is not so, since our experts did indeed communicate whenever they were reached out to.

Over the past few weeks, we have patiently explained that we cannot take the proposed concept seriously. It was wrong from the start in that it was geared towards entrenching the systemic flaws in the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism as well as that of the Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Today's statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States was focused not on the Mechanism but, as usual, on Russia. Clearly, we will also be hearing repeated accusations of Russia in interviews and press releases.

Today my British colleague referred to — even, one might say, blurted out and betrayed, and I am very grateful to him for his frankness — the main point that this spectacle was conceived and based on. The Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom said that there is no place for Russia in the political process in Syria. There we are. That is why this whole unscrupulous performance was devised, to cast doubt on Russia's role in the political process for resolving the Syrian crisis. I would like to thank Mr. Rycroft for saying out loud what many could not bring themselves to do.

There was nothing balanced about the United States draft resolution. The main emphases in the text remained the same throughout the expert discussions. The changes made were merely cosmetic and did not deal with a single one of the flaws in the bodies investigating the Syrian chemical weapons dossier. We would like to remind our United States colleagues — and those who were not interested in examining the details when they supported the draft resolution, divorced from reality, submitted by the United States — that it is they who will bear the burden of responsibility if the Mechanism cannot be preserved. Russia is doing everything it can to prevent that from happening. It had appeared that we were united by one goal — extending the Mechanism's mandate and increasing its effectiveness in the interests of identifying the real perpetrators of chemical weapon crimes. It turns out, however, that some of our partners in the Security Council have other priorities.

From a historical perspective, many have now observed that the endless distortions regarding Damascus and chemical weapons, which were in fact removed and destroyed under OPCW oversight, are strongly reminiscent of the situation in Iraq almost 15 years ago. At the time, the representatives of the United States deliberately misled the international community, including the Security Council, in order to establish grounds for the intervention that ultimately resulted in immeasurable misery for Iraq and the entire region.

In his recently published memoir, Gordon Brown, former United Kingdom Prime Minister, openly discusses the dubious nature of the arguments supporting the military campaign launched against Iraq in 2003. As it turns out, the United States deliberately concealed from its closest allies the conclusions of its military specialists, who had been unable to establish any credible traces of Iraqi activity linked to weapons of mass destruction. This is not the first statesperson and will probably not be the last who over time has a stroke of insight or epiphany in relation to the mosntrous experiments in Iraq and Libya. Will this geopolitical laboratory never shut down?

Russia, which has always unconditionally supported the international regime on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, has proposed, not for the first time but so far without success, together with its Chinese partners, that the Security Council should tackle the issue of chemical terrorism in the Middle East seriously. Last year, at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, our Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov proposed drafting an international convention to combat acts of chemical and biological terrorism. We call on everyone to join the discussions on the issue. Any delay on it could be very costly.

In conclusion, I would like to support my Bolivian colleague's proposal to resubmit draft resolution S/2017/933. We would like to be a co-sponsor of the draft resolution and propose that it be put it to the vote today.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Italy.

On six occasions, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) has certified the use of chemical weapons in Syria by the Syrian Government and Da'esh. Many other allegations are being investigated by the Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the Syrian Arab Republic. We believe that the Security Council has the responsibility to address that serious trend, upholding the integrity and credibility of the crucial long-standing norms of our collective security and preserving paths for accountability. Preventing the recurrence of violations should also be a common priority for all Council members. The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism is a critical tool in that regard, and Italy fully supported the renewal of its mandate.

The draft resolution under consideration today (S/2017/962) was the result of an open negotiation in which Council members made a collective effort to strengthen the implementation of the JIM's mandate. A number of delegations suggested ways to ensure that the JIM operates more effectively, and the draft resolution included a number of those suggestions. At the same time, as many of us requested, the draft resolution protected the Mechanism's independence, preserved the integrity of its mandate and upheld the credibility of its past investigations. We believe that the draft resolution and the negotiations that led to it — and we thank the delegation of the United States for its continued efforts in that respect — embodied a willingness to find compromise and achieve common ground, meeting the concerns and principles expressed by all delegations.

We are deeply disappointed, therefore, by the result of the voting today, as it deprives the international community of a crucial tool for fighting impunity for

some of the most heinous and unacceptable crimes committed in Syria. The international community is now weaker, and our collective security architecture shakier, as a result of today's vote. But the outcome is difficult to accept. That is why we will continue to work with the other Council members on the issue — hopefully, immediately after this meeting — mindful of its crucial importance for the non-proliferation regime and the principle of accountability. We hope that collectively we will be able to return to the positive trend of cooperation and consensus on this crucial issue that we have been developing in the Council since 2013.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We need to understand the important discussions that have taken place in the Chamber today.

I invite Council members to review a report published by the *Daily Mail* in January 2013 and later withdrawn. The report includes the e-mail correspondence between sernior officials at a British company called Britam Defence. It describes a plot that was subsequently approved by Washington, D.C., whereby Qatar, in cooperation with Turkey, would finance and support rebels in Syria to use chemical weapons and then blame the Syrian Government for the use of those weapons. The report was published in a British newspaper in 2013, not a Syrian newspaper.

Unfortunately, some members of the Council are treating the cases of the false justifications that were made in the brazen invasion of Libya and Iraq as though they were incidents that would be forgotten by the Council, and could be repeated at any time with guaranteed impunity. We cannot allow thet. Fortunately, there are some members of the Council whose memory is still good, and they do not forget.

Russia did not obstruct the work of the Security Council today. It has worked to prevent another tragedy such as that witnessed in Libya and Iraq. It has preserved the integrity of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations at a time when integrity and purity have been lacking. The vote of the Russian Federation today has saved the Council from manipulating a United Nations mechanism whose Chair is supposed to have at least the same courage as the Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission established pursuant to Security Council resolution 687 (1991), the Swedish Rolf Ekeus and the Australian Richard Butler, who refused to legitimize the United Kingdom-United States invasion of Iraq.

We in the Syrian Arab Republic — a founding Member of the United Nations — still believe that the Organization plays a vital role in finding solutions to crises when Member States comply with the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, foremost of which is the maintenance of international peace and security, which is the main responsibility of the Council.

However, the fact of the matter is that there are three permanent members of the Council who have adopted aggressive and hegemonic policies. They regard the United Nations and the Security Council as mere administrative offices or commercial entities in the service of achieving their goals. Fortunately, two permanent members, along with other states, oppose such practices and attenuate that hegemony and aggression. Were it not for those two countries, which are committed to the purposes of the Charter, to date the world would have experienced even more destruction, wars, crises and iterations of the Al-Nusra Front, which was created by those three countries when they decided to sponsor and finance terrorism and use it as a weapon against all those who oppose their interventionist policy. In the Syrian Arab Republic, we therefore continue to believe that it is the principles of international law and the purposes of the Charter that must govern international relations. We continue to believe that truth and justice will ultimately prevail, as the only alternative is chaos.

Accordingly, from the very beginning my Government has cooperated with the United Nations, its bodies, committees and numerous envoys. When armed terrorist groups carried out their crimes in Khan al-Assal, near Aleppo, on 19 March 2013, which marked the first case of the use of chemical weapons, the United Nations was the only entity from which my Government sought assistance to investigate the use of chemical weapons there. Only hours after that incident, I personally met with former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. I asked him to send an emergency mission to help the Syrian Government investigate the use of toxic chemical substances and identify the perpetrators. Within just a few hours following our meeting, as he told me, the Secretary-General consulted with the influential members of the Council.

He then called back to inform me that the United Nations would provide assistance only in determining whether chemical substances had been used, but that it would not be able to help identify the perpetrators of those crimes. Although we agreed to receive that incomplete mandate, it took four months for the Secretary-General to send an investigation mission, under the leadership of the Swedish professor Åke Sellström. Despite that unjustified delay of four months, the Mission has yet to set foot in Khan al-Assal. That was four and a half years ago. The mission has not yet gone to Khan al-Assal as a result of the fabrication of the Ghouta incidents, which took place just minutes before Mr. Sellström's mission was supposed to leave for Khan al-Assal.

I am recounting that story only because it has been repeated many times. It was a rather historic moment, as it showed that the mechanisms and committees established by the United Nations to investigate the use of chemical substances in Syria would not be permitted to establish the truth or carry out their work professionally, impartially, independently and transparently. The three States and their proxies in the region were focused on only one aspect — their conspiracy with armed terrorist groups to stage crimes using chemical substances against Syrian civilians and to accuse the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic of them because they have not found more dangerous types of weapon to carry out their interventionist and destructive agendas after having exhausted all other tricks up their sleeve.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, we are not at all opposed to the establishment of investigative mechanisms that are independent, honest and professional to determine who is responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. As I just said, we were the first to ask for such assistance. We believe that the draft resolution that was introduced by Russia and China and vetoed by three States since the beginning, was aimed at assisting the Mechanism to carry out its mandate, in accordance with the norms pursuant to the relevant international terms of reference, and steering it away from politicization and the pressure that has been exerted by the United States, the United Kingdom and France. This would have righted the course of its work in a way that would have enabled it to find that truth based on physical and conclusive evidence, which does not allow for multiple interpretations, falsification or manipulation. Any draft resolution failing to consider those standards and safeguards would be analogous to a mere PlayStation game and represent a desperate attempt to give to the dangerous endeavour of conducting investigation [illegible] relying on false witnesses, information given [illegible] the Al-Nusra Front, a terrorist group on their [illegible] affiliated with it, such as the White Helmets [illegible] warning mechanisms, as mentioned in the report of the Chairman of the Mechanism, that are able to get [illegible] unknown and can somehow detect chemical [illegible] carried by aircraft flying at a distance of [illegible] kilometres away.

I remind everyone that the United States delegation was quick to ask the Council to extend the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism only 48 hours after its seventh report (S/2017/904), although [illegible] although by then it had been revealed that the report had already been prepared and written in the dark rooms of London, Paris, and Washington, D.C. The leadership of the Mechanism only had to sign and seal the report to present it to the Council on 7 November (see S/PV.8080). It did not hesitate even with even noting the remarks made by Council members and responding to them at that meeting. I will not repeat the remarks that I made at last week's meeting in this Chamber on the legal, technical and scientific aspects that refute the report and all that it includes regarding the methodology and specious conclusions of the Mechanism related to Khan Shaykhun.

Some Council members may not be aware of the fact that a British expert from the United Kingdom Permanent Mission to the United Nations visited many permanent missions to advocate for the same findings of the report before it had even been submitted. When I say the same findings, I mean the exact same wording, terminology and information. What impartiality and professionalism are we talking about with the presence of a British expert who had promoted the same outcomes that were to be found in the report?

My country, Syria, reiterates that it has complied with the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. Since we acceded to the Convention in 2013, we have presented no banned toxic chemical substances, as confirmed by Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Head of the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations for the Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Programme of the Syrian Arab Republic, in her report to the Council that was submitted in June 2014 (S/2014/443, annex).

Syria considers the use of chemical to be an immoral act that must be condemned, regardless of where, when and under what conditions they are used.

In conclusion, together with a number of other Member States' Governments, we believe that the time has come for the Council to shoulder its responsibility of maintaining international peace and security with integrity and in a balanced manner. To that end, some members of the Council must ensure that their actions match their words, especially those that enthusiastically advocate for extending the Mechanism according to the American way. Those countries must demonstrate the same enthusiasm to ensure the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, some of which are based on Chapter VII of the Charter, and investigate violations of those resolutions by Governments of some States. Those countries should also consider the hundreds of letters that we sent to the Council on the support and funding of arms that has been and is still being provided by the Governments of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey to armed terrorist groups in Syria and the ongoing support of Israel to the Al-Nusra Front in the separation zone of the occupied Golan, which led to the abduction of two members of the contingents of Fiji and the Philippines deployed to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.

I wish to inform you, Sir — and I am sure that you are aware of this — that I sent a letter yesterday to the President of the Council asking for an investigation into a documented report published by the British Broadcasting Corporation on the support provided by the so-called international coalition forces to terrorists of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This support was supposedly under the cover of NGO channels, provide them with shelter and obstruct the operations of the Syrian Arab Army and its allies against ISIL. We look forward to the same level of enthusiasm that the Council demonstrated today in dealing with all the issues that I have mentioned in my statement.

The President: I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting for 15 minutes in order to prepare the documents for the consideration.

It is so decided.

The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4.15 p.m.

The President: Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/968, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the way in which you are conducting the work of this unusual meeting of the Council. We believe it is important that the text of the draft resolution (S/2017/968) that we are submitting be put before members of the Council for their consideration. We do not need to apologize for having recourse to the provisional rules of procedure of the Council.

At the same time, we wish to make it clear that we wish the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism to continue its work and we also want to address the concerns of other members of the Security Council. With that, my delegation would like to ask Security Council members for their support to the draft resolution.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation shares our common commitment to a world free of chemical weapons and is concerned about the continuing incidences of chemical terrorism in the Middle East. Our position is unchanged. We condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone in any circumstances. The perpetrators of such crimes must be held accountable.

Russia was part of the successful chemical disarmament of Syria from the start and was one of the founders of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) to investigate incidents of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We believed that working professionally, responsibly and impartially, the Mechanism would be a good gift of clarifying who might be the perpetrators of possible chemical weapons attacks, based on irrefutable data. However, it became clear that there were fundamental flaws in the Mechanism's activities that would not permit us to formally consider the question of extending its operation. They include its method of working, namely, the fact that it focused exclusively on data from opposition groups and non-governmental sources, and it disregarded

for the entire range of tasks and methods provided for under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In the past few weeks we have frequently brought up the impossibility of considering extending the JIM's mandate without considering the conclusions of its seventh report (S/2017/904, annex), which are a complete shambles. The analysis of Russian specialists in that regard was submitted for the consideration of the States Members of the United Nations, and we discussed it at the Council's meeting on 7 November (see S/PV.8099). Suffice it to say that the version according to which a Syrian military aircraft dropped a sarin bomb on Khan Shaykhun is completely unrealistic, going as it does against the laws of physics and ballistics. A plane following the trajectory recorded by American radar would have been physically incapable of being involved in this act. An unguided missile could not have been dropped perpendicular to the aircraft and then have exploded more than five kilometres from it. Our country's specialists know the tactical and technical details of the Su-22 aircraft better than anyone and therefore categorically exclude that possibility. The report contains a ton of other errors and inconsistencies for which we did not receive any convincing explanations, though Mr. Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament, did attempt to respond to some questions — with no success, frankly. Her answers essentially refer back to the JIM's report and the very conclusions we wanted clarified, and we therefore got no real explanation. Mr. Muller, the Head of the JIM, focused on discussions with the press in a very strange way for someone reporting a supposedly independent investigative unit and in an interview on 9 November, with the New York Times, he took the liberty of making unfounded and insulting attacks on Russia that did his dignity no service.

Against the backdrop of a poorly investigation that cannot tolerate any criticism and seriously evaded up by individuals who transform its efforts that civilians like a house of cards when checked up on, the JIM had the nerve to come carefully worded against an entire State, the Syrian Arab Republic, by doing so the leadership of the Mechanism overstepped its own competence and interfered in some of the legitimate political speculations about Syria. Moreover, we know that Khan Shaykhun gives rise to a possibility of the attack happened as a result of an airstrike conducting the technical instruction of IS weapons factory. And we insist that they are.

Nonetheless, we want to preserve the Mechanism. The draft resolution (S/2017/968) that was first submitted today by us and has now been resubmitted by Bolivia, and which we will now put to the vote, is designed to extend the mandate with significant improvements in the quality of the JIM's work and to bring it fully in line with the high standards of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are not about to infringe on the independence of the Mechanism's investigators. The task consists of establishing clear, transparent parameters for its activity, which would also help to prevent any further manipulation of the investigation's activities as supplied up until now by opponents of the Syrian Government.

The draft resolution directs the JIM to conduct its investigations in accordance with Chemical Weapons Convention practice, working at the actual sites of chemical incidents and using the entire range of methods and means at its disposal. The Security Council must be immediately informed of potential issues with access. If an investigation on the ground is still impossible, we propose that the Mechanism should ignore the results of its own investigations and submit findings from the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission until a fully fledged investigation is possible, strengthening the ties between the two entities and enabling them to function as effectively as possible.

We cannot consider the investigation of the sarin incident in Khan Shaykhun concluded until the JIM has visited the site and collected samples at the Shayrat air base. The draft resolution includes specific provisions for that. It directs the Secretary-General to provide additional recommendations for building the JIM's capacity within a 30-day period and requires the Security Council to consider those proposals promptly.

We firmly believe that the Mechanism must take a more responsible approach to its obligations under the joint investigative mechanism and must be unbiased in investigating chemical weapons and the individuals behind them, be it the Syrian authorities or [illegible] and the numerous militants from Syria to the regard as a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, have been involved.

We are certain of the draft resolution we tried as much as possible to take the views of our Security Council partners into account and have included in it a number of ideas from the United States and several other Council members. In particular, we agreed to extend the mandate for a year rather than for a month, as

provided for in resolutions 2235 (2015) and 2319 (2016). We were willing to correct the operational paragraph on the re-evaluation of the conclusions from the JIM's reports of last year, confining it solely to the episode in the Sarmin area. At the time, the Mechanism based its conclusions on a version in which a chlorine-filled barrel bomb fell from a high altitude into a ventilation shaft of a diameter similar to the bomb's, even though the Mechanism itself terms that unlikely. Unbelievable.

We call on the members of the Security Council to vote in favour of the draft resolution, which, together with Bolivia and China, we are submitting for their consideration.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): There are a few things that I think we have to realize here. I think a lot of it has to do with genuineness — whether it was real or not, with the actors, whether they were to be trusted or not, with the process of how all of that played out, and where we go from there. Given that, I have a few comments to make.

First, we all voted. We voted that we were going to follow the rules. We were going to take the Russian draft resolution (S/2017/962) first and the United States draft resolution (S/2017/963) second. Bolivia showed a complete lack of respect for the Council by turning around and playing a game so as to have its vote after the vote on the United States draft resolution. We will have that vote, and it will have the same outcome. For a member that always says it wants to be transparent, there was nothing transparent about that. Bolivia really tried to pull one over on the entire Council, and it is on Bolivia alone to deal with.

Secondly, the United States took the draft resolution very seriously. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) is one that we strongly believed in. We engaged in good faith with Russia when we first came up with the JIM. We were all united and together when we established the JIM. It was done for a reason, because chemical weapons usage in Syria continues and people continue to die from it. Because of that, we think how important the JIM was. I was asked to thank Russia for first supporting the JIM.

What is fascinating, however, is that Russia's only problem, during something there is the JIM — that is never found any [illegible] to hold the Syrians from using and Syria [illegible] is its responsibility. The Syrian did not want to [illegible] them. They came [illegible] that [illegible] Syria was blamed. Why is that? Was the process different? Did the experts not do it the same way? Did they treat ISIS differently from how they treated Syria? Is that what we are going to imply? So where is our responsibility? Our responsibility is that the JIM must remain independent.

So then we had a new draft resolution. By the way, the United States worked with each and every member of the Council on the draft resolution, even Russia. Though it did not want to engage with us, we took into account things that we knew we could bring in from the draft resolution, and we have the changes. I showed Russia those changes, and Russia then said it had had no intention of voting for it from the very beginning and that it was always going to veto it. Again, that was disingenuous, because Russia should have just told all of us that that was its intention in the first place.

Let me turn now to the process. There is another draft resolution on the table. Suddenly, Russia puts out a draft resolution and I hear some it. They did not reach base with a single other country on the Council. Neither of them held consultations and neither of them wanted to discuss it. To them it was all a game, in which they would just counter it with something else — and they did. All of us can still look at it, and I can tell you what we think. They want a JIM that does not have independence. They want a JIM that does not have reporting. They want a JIM that they can micromanage — so that any member can micromanage. That is the JIM they want. That is what they are looking for.

Today, I have heard so many of my friends on the Council talk about how this is all embarrassing. It is embarrassing that the Council is not united. It is embarrassing that we are allowing this to play out. No. What is embarrassing is that we do not have a JIM selected. What is embarrassing is that everyone is worried about who they are going to upset, and they are not thinking about the people who were affected by chemical weapons.

To realize the importance of what the investigative mechanism would do, one has to also realize when a country is affecting [illegible] with people's lives. That is exactly what is happening there, and it is happening [illegible] today. We have watched it happen — in different [illegible]. [illegible] the only thing that today has proved is that Russia cannot be [illegible] to the political process in Syria. Russia will use the [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] to make its [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible] it that [illegible].

because it wants to work with Iran and Syria to make sure that they have that all under control. If someone is okay with that, then he or she should make the decision. The United States is not okay with that.

So what I will say is that through this process we were very kind and tried to work with everyone — as we always do — because we think that every member is important. And we may smile, and we may work with everyone, and we may incorporate these changes, but the United States will not be disrespected. We worked for months on a draft resolution, and then they turn around and say, "Oh, can we come up with something else?" I have a draft resolution with every change that was requested, but we are going to allow one member to basically give a pass to chemical-weapons use in Syria.

I will tell my Russia friends this — the next chemical weapons attack is on their hands. The next protocol I hold up will be because they let it happen. Because by not having the JIM, they are basically telling the entire world that chemical weapons are okay to use. That is what we should be embarrassed about today.

The President: The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation

Against:

France, Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay

Abstaining:

Egypt, Ethiopia, Japan, Senegal

The draft resolution received [illegible] votes in favour and 4 abstentions. The draft resolution is not adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

I shall now give the floor to those members who wish to make statements after the voting.

The Russian proposal to — as it calls it — find out who is to blame, yet again. But it does explain why Russia's report has not progressed in the Council for months. And it also explains why Russia has attempted to block the Council's fully independent and impartial investigation into an organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security into a media show.

I reiterate that we abstained in the voting on both draft resolutions only after we made strenuous efforts to bring differing positions closer together and to renew and enhance the performance of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism without compromising its independence. We saw room for consensus and tried to build on it. However, this opportunity was not seized and the polarization continued until we reached today's outcome.

I reaffirm that consensus is possible. There is room for consensus if we have enough willpower. We are prepared to pursue our efforts to preserve the Mechanism and its independence.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Ukraine voted against the draft resolution initially proposed by the Russian Federation (S/2017/968) for several reasons.

First, we view the document as a deliberate attempt to undermine the credibility and independence of both the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and the Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (FFM).

Secondly, it appears from the text that the goal of the draft is to create artificial and unwarranted obstacles to independent investigations. Moreover, the attempt to micromanage the JIM and the FFM is nothing less than an ill-disguised effort to sabotage the work of both the Mission and the Mechanism.

Thirdly, it is also noteworthy that the document was not open for negotiation within the Council. That speaks volumes about the willingness of its authors to actually reach agreement on it and, by the way, to contribute to the draft resolution proposed by the United States (S/2017/962), which was the product of real negotiations.

All in all, we cannot support a scenario, the sole aim of which is to protect at any price the perpetrators of atrocious crimes in Syria from accountability.

Mr. Gombo (Japan): Japan did not support the draft resolution initially submitted by Russian Federation (S/2017/968) because we do not support re-assessment of the past work of the Organization for the Prohibition of

Chemical Weapons United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

While we take note of Russia's willingness to consider renewing the mandate of the JIM and Russia's wish to improve the work of the JIM, we believe that the best way to keep the JIM in operation was described in the draft resolution submitted by the United States (S/2017/962), which failed to be adopted. There is no changing the fact that the Council is ultimately responsible for ensuring accountability for the use of chemical weapons. Again, I sincerely urge all members of the Council not to abandon our efforts and to continue discussions in order to find a way to prevent the further use of chemical weapons and not to allow impunity.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons inside Syria. We support investigations into the incidents so as to bring to justice the perpetrators and those responsible for unleashing the chemical-weapons attacks.

We support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) in continuing its work. The draft resolution on which the Council voted (S/2017/962) contains the proposed extension of the JIM mandate by a year, condemns the chemical-weapons attacks in Syria, demands investigations, and expresses concern over the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors, including terrorist organizations. It also seeks to improve the JIM's working methods and mandate and to strengthen its on-site investigation and evidence collection, and proposes specific measures to improve the JIM's work and to ensure the reliability and credibility of the conclusions of its investigations.

China supported and voted in favour of the draft resolution. We regret the fact that it was not adopted.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are deeply disappointed that our initiative aimed at extending and improving the quality of the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) to investigate instances of the use of chemical weapons in Syria did not receive the necessary support.

We insisted that various ideas would be used as an attempt to blame Russia for a possible disruption of the JIM's activities. On 16 October, with exactly the same intention, we were deliberately made to exercise our veto when there was no need for a vote on the first place (see S/PV.8071). We are not ruling out the possibility that the intention of defaming our country has superseded that of preserving the Mechanism. We will now listen to numerous comments from our colleagues around this table, intended for the press. The world will be awash in lies about what transpired today in the Security Council. As usual, Russia will be blamed for everything.

I get the impression that no one listens to me or hears me when I speak. Everything that I said in my statement — two statements, actually — was essentially ignored. We were accused of not taking part in consultations, even though we met at least three times at the expert level with our United States colleagues. We were accused of saying from the outset that we would not permit the adoption of the United States draft resolution. That is true, because the draft resolution proposed by the United States untouched the JIM's fundamental errors. But we proposed our own initiative. We have been accused of playing games. We think it is not we who are playing games but others who are playing games with us. We have been told that we welcome the results of the work of the JIM when terrorists are accused of chemical attacks while at the same time we are covering up for the Syrian Government. That is not true.

We are protesting about the JIM's blatant unprofessionalism, which is most likely intentional. To give an example from a different area, in an argument put forward in the Mechanism's seventh report (S/2017/904), arrows in support of the claim that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) used mustard gas at Umm Hawsh, the only evidence was that it was claimed that ISIL had been observed using it in the past, and the other group mentioned had not. Is that a professional investigation? It is simply ridiculous.

We firmly believe that people who are paying attention will understand what is really going on. Let me reiterate that in the past few years Russia, as a conscientious party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, has done a great deal of work with regard to the chemical demilitarization of Syria, including, among other things, helping to establish and support the JIM. During that entire time, we have consistently sought to focus the effectiveness of its work, with an effort at understanding from a number of our Western partners, being the main reason why we need a robust, professional investigative mechanism that

will help to prevent the threat of chemical terrorism in the region from spreading, but what others want is a puppet entity so that they can manipulate public opinion, an entity that will repeatedly accuse the Syrian Government of violating international norms, based on false information.

Those who voted against the draft resolution submitted by Russia and China bear full responsibility for shutting down the activities of the JIM.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you once again, Mr. President, for your leadership of the Council at this meeting.

We are of course as frustrated as the majority of the members around this table, given another collective failure on the part of the Council to work together to extend the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. I come from a country that has never used chemical weapons and a region that is in the process of successfully settling its very last armed conflict, that is free of nuclear weapons and that I believe has repeatedly demonstrated its respect for international law and the United Nations.

The representative of the United States has said here in effect a number that it is he has shown a lack of respect for the Council and has not acted transparently. We categorically reject those claims. They are absolutely unacceptable and untrue. Bolivia will not apologize for using the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council. We supported the draft resolution submitted by Russia at the outset of the meeting on [illegible] and it became clear that we were going to have to have recourse to the provisional rules of procedure. In doing so, a delegation that enjoys the same rights as every other delegation cannot be accused of exhibiting a lack of transparency or of not showing respect for the other members of the Security Council. That is unacceptable.

If we are talking about transparency and a lack of respect for the Security Council, perhaps we should recall the closed consultations held on 7 April at which we all worked to approve a draft resolution on the situation in Syria. Was it out of a lack of respect for the Security Council or a lack of transparency that, the whole time that we were trying to find a way out of that situation, the United States was planning an air strike on a military base in Syria, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations? That was an unacceptable unilateral action. Bolivia categorically rejects those accusations.

In any case, Bolivia will continue to work to extend the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. We hope that we can leave behind this media circus where we resort to finger-pointing at one another for failures of responsibility. We hope that we can offer a glimmer of hope to the victims of chemical-weapon attacks, not just in Syria but all over the world, and I reiterate my hope that future negotiations will succeed in extending the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I will be brief. I actually forgot to mention three issues that I think it is important to mention today. I would first like to sincerely thank you, Mr. President, for your stewardship of today's meeting. It has been difficult, but you managed to conduct it in truly presidential fashion. Secondly, I should recall something that I forgot to mention, which is that our alternative draft resolution (S/2017/970) was not submitted yesterday, but has been before the Council since 7 November.

Lastly, I would like to note, which I omitted to earlier, that while Bolivia clearly does not need Russia's protection, it does need support. In my view, the United States representative's accusations of a lack of transparency with regard to today's process on the part of the representative of Bolivia were completely unjustified. Regrettably, we see the lack transparency in today's voting process displayed by the counterparts of the negotiations.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.